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WHERE ARE WE GOING?

By CHRISTOPHER TURNOR & BERNARD GILBERT

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Where are We Going?

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

A MANIFESTO TO ALL
WHO LIVE ON OR BY
THE LAND OF ENGLAND

56007

By

CHRISTOPHER TURNOR
Author of "Land Problems and National Welfare," etc.

and

BERNARD GILBERT
Author of "Old England," etc.

With a Preface by
LORD BLEDISLOE OF LYDNEY.

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FOREWORD.

This Rural Manifesto in book form—the collaborative effort of Mr. Christopher Turnor and Mr. Bernard Gilbert—is as unconventional and incisive as it is opportune. It lays bare the state of Rural Britain and of the urban mind towards Rural Britain with a merciless outspokenness, which leaves no room for doubt as to its meaning or objective, and gives no quarter either to the mere professional politician or to the unscrupulous opportunist. As our French friends would say, "it gives one furiously to think," and that, no doubt, is the object of its ingenious and farsighted authors. The campaign which they seek to inaugurate in the interests of rural solidarity and of the economic and political strength which is bound to flow therefrom, may possibly be regarded, at least by the mentally indolent

and apathetic, as premature. But no one can suggest that it is either unprovoked or eventually avoidable. The old question "Quo Vadis" is put by the authors to each and every member of the Rural Community. "Where are you drifting to?" in effect they say. "'Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by' the ruin of the countryside, ye landowners, farm tenants, rural traders, patriots? Will your town-bred Conservatism, Liberalism or Socialism save you from economic ruin or your country from the indescribable perils of another war?" And in negativing this query they are surely only giving utterance to a conviction which has been gaining strength in rural England for the last two decades, which received its strongest impetus when the Agriculture Act—the much-vaunted charter of future agricultural prosperity—was thrown by its own parents on the statutory scrap-heap six months after its enactment, and which is creeping slowly yet surely

into the mental consciousness of even the most bucolic of our agricultural population. That each political party in turn has made Agriculture its catspaw, has traded mercilessly on its ignorance, its sectional differences and its economic poverty cannot be gainsaid. Landowners, its proper champions, have lived out their lives largely detached from the ultimate source of their economic existence and subsistence, and have been beguiled into political attachments which have brought no continuing stability to their class, and still less to its material interests. The agricultural workers have formed the "submerged tenth" of a once rich nation, the majority of whose inhabitants have waxed fat upon their impoverishment and upon that of the industry which gave them employment. It is their ingrained Conservatism which has alone in the past deterred them from anarchy and revolt. The farmers have sought to the best of their power, but often without vision, to fight

an unequal battle, as a sort of separate caste, against highly organised urban interests, and being peculiarly amenable to flattery have easily and repeatedly fallen a prey to the allurements of party politicians who have sought to use them (and generally have succeeded in doing so) for the advancement of their own ends. Many with strong Conservative traditions will deeply deplore the severance (if severance there must be) from the old Constitutional Party of that sturdy element which constituted in the past its backbone, and gave it its healthful vigour and resilience, as it has in every other civilised country in the world. But unfortunately political Conservatism which once claimed most countrymen as its adherents has no longer its roots in the wholesome soil of the countryside. They rest to-day in the hollow and dank cellars of the towns where alone the nation's transient 'wealth' (but not its well-being) is to be found. Dominated by urban

influence, founded alas on ignorance and myopic prejudice, the modern Statesman —even the Conservative Statesman—has no settled *plan* for the salvation of British Agriculture, because he has no convictions. Such measures as he may be induced to take for its alleged benefit are mere temporary palliatives evoked by the passing fear of wartime starvation or by a regional strike or widespread social unrest, consequent upon starvation wages, which may ultimately influence the ballot box. They have no reference to any fundamental principles, and by their piecemeal character they tend to obstruct the development of any comprehensive and defensible policy to which all parties can give their adherence in the interests of national security.

The authors of this booklet, while emphasising the fact that all existing party organisations are to-day swayed alone by urban influence and urban wealth, appeal in plain language to all rural folk to heal their

domestic differences and combine for their own salvation—economic and political—or else perish. They recognise that the points of contact between all agricultural classes are immeasurably greater than their points of difference, and that only by solidarity and mutual trustfulness can the salvation of all alike (and with them of the nation itself) be assured in the future. And no doubt they are right. Organised strength will alone evoke respect from other sections of the community and will alone win for British Agriculture attention to its equitable claims, and thus inaugurate a new period of agricultural prosperity which will make rural Britain the best and safest market for the products of British factories and the soundest insurance against widespread unemployment and helpless dependence upon the fate or the favour of other nations.

BLEDISLOE.

LYDNEY PARK,

Sept. 1st, 1923.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

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1.—Times are Bad.

Whenever agriculture is depressed, the air is full of advice. Folks tell farmers what they ought to do; there is a fuss in the Press and a stir in Parliament . . . and things go on just the same. Sometimes, however, things get so bad—as they did in the 'Eighties'—that a good many are ruined; and a fresh lot of folk, with fresh money, have to come in and restart matters. But nobody in the city seems to mind that.

We are now in for bad times again, and it looks as if, within the next few years, many farmers and landowners may be squeezed out of existence; and many land-workers have to find jobs in a town. The cities won't mind that! Their papers will say that it's a pity, and that 'something should be done'; but they won't do anything. Why should they? If there isn't

a war on, they can get their food just as cheaply from abroad, whether the English countryside is being ruined or not.

Still . . . the war has opened our eyes and we see that things are not quite the same. Especially abroad. The 'Farm-Block' in the United States has taken the bit between its teeth, despite the furious opposition of the older regular parties; a 'Farmers' Party' in Canada has caused a sensation; and almost everywhere Agrarian Parties are making themselves felt.

Everywhere—except in England!

Even here there is a facing of the truth that the real division is between cities with their commerce and the countryside with its agriculture.

It is true that we are very slow-going and conservative in England, but necessity drives the slowest; and the time has come that we must look round, not only to see where we are, but where we are going.

We are, to-day, producing no more

wheat than we did in the year 1800, and vastly less than we did in 1840. From the beginning, up to the middle of the last century, our agriculture steadily advanced, and people from other countries came here to study our methods. After that date it began to decline, both in area cultivated and in persons employed; this decrease being both comparative and actual. Since 1840 our production of wheat has declined approximately 66 per cent., whilst the number employed in agriculture has gone down enormously, and is now only 8 per cent. of the whole.

This has occurred during eighty years of amazing advance in urban trade, industry, and population, so that the balance of the nation has been entirely upset. Well might Prince Bulow say that Germany would never consider the adoption of Free Trade, lest her agriculture should go the way that England's had gone. Between 1888 and 1913 German production of cereals

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and potatoes increased over 100 per cent. and her live stock also increased 100 per cent.!

These are the facts. The cause is not denied. National attention has been turned toward trade and manufacture for export and away from agriculture; and in consequence, agriculture has declined. Let this be clearly understood. The decline in agricultural prosperity, during the last eighty years, is simply and solely due to our national policy.

This policy can and may be reversed.

2.—Where Do We Stand?

There are three great parties striving for political power. Let us take a look at them.

First: the Conservatives. In the past, they have been the rural party, and during

the golden period of agriculture, managed pretty well. But all through the 19th Century a struggle was in progress and the party was continually leaning toward urban votes and interests. Before the end of the century the battle was lost; and, since then, the party has been dependent upon urban support for power. Agricultural interests were necessarily subordinated. It is true that the majority of those with rural interests are still members of the party, because the other parties are of still less use to them, but they stand in the position of poor relations, and are treated with a neglect amounting to contempt.

For a generation, however, a rural revolt has been brewing.

Next : the Liberals. These are purely an urban class, with no first-hand acquaintance of rural affairs. They looked on rural seats as, mainly, forlorn hopes. But they always felt the drag of this solid block of opposition, and at the height of their power

—1906 to 1913—began a campaign to secure the rural voters. They saw that these were already prepared to revolt against the Conservative leaders, and hoped to dislodge them altogether. Their Campaign was in full swing, when it was brought to a sudden close by the War.

But for the outbreak of war, they would have carried many rural seats by their new Land Policy. They could not have held them, because they could never have carried out their promises; but there was a good hope of retaining some of these, once wrested away from the old path.

It seems not unlikely that they may start another Land Campaign in the near future.

Last: Labour. Most of their writers and speakers avoid land questions altogether, knowing how dangerous these are to them. Labour is an urban party, pure and simple, and agriculture presents them with an awkward problem on their path to power.

Any land-programme that could carry the rural voter must give the landworker access to the land, and thereby turn him into the equivalent of an employer. That is to say he would cease to be a trades-unionist, after changing his present outlook, and would become, to them, a violent reactionary. In short he would defeat them, just as the Russian peasant has defeated Bolshevism.

The Labour Party being entirely ruled by Trades-Unions, will never allow such a policy to be adopted. They proclaim, instead, a vague policy of Land Nationalisation—which doesn't really mean anything at all—and press forward the rural Trades-Unions, with the raising of wages and easing of conditions of work. Their unfortunate rural candidates urge them to formulate a Land Programme, but are overwhelmed by the urban delegates.

Not only can Labour never have a Land Programme that will hold the

rural voter; but all brands of Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, and the like, find a fatal enemy in rural areas. Rural people, as soon as they get access to land, defeat city-revolutions with the utmost promptness and certainty. They defeated Robespierre as easily as they have conquered Lenin. They are the great bulwark of private property against revolution.

Labour however is great at promises; especially those made at the expense of other classes; and to secure power will go further than the Liberals dared. They will probably announce their intention of dividing up the land of the country amongst their adherents; hoping thereby to solve the difficulty of a Land Programme, and trusting to fortune to smooth things out when they achieve power.

3.—The Late Coalition.

Besides these three parties we must take a glance at the late Coalition, which was the worst of all. It did more abominably unconscionable things than we have yet seen.

In affright, during the war, it passed a Corn-Production-Act, trusting to which, farmers bought land at high prices, and breaking up their old ways of cultivation, entered boldly into new methods of producing larger crops. These methods were only safe under the protection of the Act. But with barefaced cynicism this Act was repealed; the Government fearing that they might have to pay something!

There was, of course, a shocking result.

In June, 1921, wheat was 89/-; in December it was 46/-. Barley fell from

73/- to 46/-, and fat cattle from 100/- to 62/-. No industry could stand against a fall so disastrously sudden. It was in order to avert this sudden drop that the Act of 1917 had been passed; and it was trusting to this solemn national pledge that farmers had ventured upon an unsafe high-speed production.

They did it to save England . . and have received their reward. The result has been to bring many farmers to the verge of ruin. Landowners are hard hit. Wages have dropped 50 per cent.; and our rural people have received a lesson in the value of pledges.

4.—Urban Fallacies.

Before leaving the old political parties, we would touch upon some of the more absurd misconceptions about rural condi-

tions that prevail amongst the ranks of the Liberals and Labourites. Some of their writers and speakers appear to be in complete ignorance as to the facts. It would take a long volume to deal with them adequately; but we can mention a few of the most glaring.

The most usual cry is "That land is a monopoly, and should be free." This is rubbish. Land is no more a monopoly than houses or money or furniture or any other kind of property. It is not more essential than clothing or food. There are countries where there is not a reasonable access to the soil for those who are ready to buy or adequately cultivate the same. In these cases (usually caused by absentee landowners) there is legitimate ground for complaining of 'monopoly.' But it is not so in England where two or three million acres come into the market every year; and where there are no less than 230,000 holders of 50 acres (and under) of agricultural land.

Land hunger is so powerful that in cases of 'monopoly' persisting, there is usually a revolution. It is either internal like the Irish (Land purchase) or national like the French and Russian.

We have in England a class of landowner who causes unrest. They are usually contractors or brewers or manufacturers who have newly bought estates and being accustomed to the disembodied ownership of industrialism, fail to appreciate the great obligations of landowning and begin by coming into conflict with rural dwellers over footpaths. When their new walls have been knocked down and their padlocks filed they accept the lesson. But they do not (for a generation) discover what the ownership of landed estates implies; and are always a cause of soreness.

Another is "That although the landowner gets a very poor income from his land he gets an adequate return from social prestige."

As a fact, the rural landlord gets no more prestige and no more social amenity than the city landlord; nor does he use his position and power in anything like so unsocial a manner.

The rural landlord is more highly taxed; he gives more in return both to his tenants and to the neighbourhood than the city landlord; and he gets a far lower income on his capital.

The favourite parrot-cry of the Socialist agitator is that: "Land being a prime necessity like air and water, should not be left in private hands, but should belong directly to the State."

There is no difference between land and railways or factories or banks Land-nationalisation is at once a bogey, an absurdity, and a piece of camouflage. If the land of England were to pass into the hands of the State to-morrow, it would have to charge vastly higher rentals to its farmers than they pay now. Not only would the

State be compelled to secure an adequate return upon the capital value of the soil, but it would have extremely high costs of administration, with hordes of officials; and would certainly always be spending money on improvements. The rents would be at the very least twice as high as they are now.

Socialists are faced by this dilemma. They don't mention 'confiscation' when forcing land-nationalisation upon the Labour Party, but if pressed in private conversation they have to admit that they will be compelled to confiscate the land in order to start off on an economic basis. They hide their intention by a scheme of 'taxation adapted to this end'; by which they mean to make landowners—great and small—buy themselves out over a period of years by a special tax without any cost to the State.

It seems likely that some such scheme will shortly be officially adopted by the

Labour Party, and we should like it to be made clear that nationalisation of land is impossible without naked confiscation. Further, we say that there is no necessity for anything of the sort. The secondary reasons about getting access to the land by private cultivators on the one hand and the community on the other are all moonshine.

The would-be cultivator can get all the land he can pay for and till, with the greatest ease. Indeed, in most cases of land-purchase since the war, the fact is bitterly regretted, because farmers are now realising the disabilities of ownership.

The wild talk about a vast increase of small-holdings, and putting every soldier on the land who feels tired of town life, is only meant to catch votes, and we will not waste time over that. No serious person can be found to stand up and defend it, or even explain it.

As for local authorities: it is true that

there are great obstacles in their way when they want land for their needs. Land transfer is surrounded by a mass of legal tape and expense that is absolutely unnecessary and is a cause of constant trouble to present landowners. They would be delighted if it could be simplified as it is—for instance—to-day in Italy, where there is no more fuss over buying a piece of land than over a motor car. Let it be done by all means—if the lawyers can be prized away from one of their most lucrative plums.

But this is not an argument for land-nationalisation, nor is it a piece of cunning trickery devised by landowners to make it difficult for anyone to buy their land!

There IS a point, however, in the cry for land-nationalisation—a real point—and one that provides the driving force behind the policy—one that is close to the heart of the Socialist. Owners of land, especially the smaller ones, are the stoutest and most

dreaded enemies of the revolutionist. The Communist and Socialist know how the peasant proprietor smashed both the French and Russian revolutions, and they mean, as a first step, to abolish landowners of all sizes. And this is very wise on their part; for the ownership of land is the very citadel of our ancient civilisation!

5.—Farmers Alone.

But if existing parties are useless and Coalitions entirely without conscience, what can be done? The Farmers' Union has been facing this situation for some years and has been driven to place its own independent candidates for Parliament in the field. Old political hands advise them that they are wasting their time and money; yet they persist; for they have found that their first policy of 'pledging' candidates

of the old parties is worse than useless. It is merely delusive. You can't foresee what is going to happen and there are always plenty of loopholes. Candidates will pledge themselves, one and all, to what fits in with their party programme, and then plead discipline or necessity.

Independent members of Parliament, representing sectional groups, are objects of pity. In England the number of farmers is so small in proportion to the electorate that they cannot hope ever to be more than a tiny group rubbing shoulders with Prohibitionists, Co-operators, Communists, in a miserable limbo. It is different in some countries. In Australia or Canada the farmers are a considerable proportion of the whole, and in such cases can take over the reins of power. But in England a Farmers' Party, representing nothing but farmers alone, has no future. Its half-dozen or half-score members would utter squeaks of protest from time to time. That's all!

As for rural-workers' candidates: these are in the worst position of all; for their party is entirely urban in outlook and their lot is in a dark corner. One pities them.

The notion that any separate section of the rural community can run a party is hopeless.

6.—Facing the Facts.

The long struggle of the 19th Century is over, and a new alignment of parties is taking place before our eyes. The rural interests are beaten and ignored; and in the new struggle there will be no quarter for the countryman, whoever else wins. No quarter, unless he becomes so organised that his enemies find it cheaper to compromise than to crush him.

Of course, it cannot be expected that rural England will suddenly reverse the tide

of the last century; but it is possible (as will be shewn) for it to organise and give the townsmen immediate food for thought and reason for negotiation. Remember that the towns themselves are rent by a three-cornered cut-throat struggle for mastery. Urban England in three camps would be powerless to ride roughshod over a united rural community. So long as the rural vote is split between the three old parties, it is ignored. But united and organised, it might hold the balance in the same way as the Irish Nationalist Party did. The Irish had the great disadvantage that they were faced by two parties only; and often they were not strong enough to swing the balance. But to-day we have three urban parties fighting desperately; and at this very moment a government is in power with an actual minority vote of the electorate.

This alters the case entirely.

7.—Attack the Best Defence.

Our investigation leads us to the opinion that there has never been so good a chance as the present for the organising of the rural vote. Until recently it has been idle to try to coax the rural voter from his agelong allegiance. He found that he was merely leaping from the frying pan to the fire, and hurried back. The Liberal shopkeeper, the Methodist labourer and the Tory farmer, all found, after experiment, that for what little benefit they got, they might just as well stick to the familiar gang and make the best of a bad job.

This however was only a negative result. The city hangs round the countryman's neck when famine or revolution threaten, and forgets its most solemn protestations or governmental pledges in five minutes—as soon as the danger has passed. If this

sounds strong, please examine the history of the Corn Production Act.

To curse one's enemies does no good; neither is it of any use to jump out of the frying pan into the fire. From the rural point of view there is not a pin to choose between the three urban parties. None of them are openly hostile to agriculture. They all give lip-service. But when the tug of self-interest comes—as over a great question like Free Trade—you see what happens! Self interest always wins. Sentiment may be pliant, reasons may always be found for what suits people but self-interest moves with the force of a mechanical power.

To be passive is to lose all. Attack is the best defence. Let us not weep that the cityfolk act as they do; because it is human nature. Let us take up our own defence . . . and attack!

8.—Things Will Be Worse.

Things are bad enough. There's no need to explain this to countryfolk, because, unfortunately, they know only too well just how bad they are. But they are going to be worse instead of better unless "something is done."

Things are also bad in the cities. And when that happens the cityfolk strive desperately to make them better at the expense of the countryside. It was not by accident that the farmer's prices were the first to fall. Not a bit of it! Consider our railways. They haven't suffered by the war: far from it; neither have their workers lost wages to anything like the extent of the rural labourer.

It isn't necessary to elaborate this argument, because as soon as it is pointed out, it becomes clear enough. Agriculture

has neither voice nor power, and therefore suffers first and most. Prices had to fall somewhere and so the Corn Production Act was repudiated. At once, under Free Trade, foodstuffs at starvation prices began to pour in from the shattered continent of Europe, and the English farmer found with dismay that his corn, cattle, and potatoes were not bringing in half the cost of their production.

This state of affairs will probably go on for a long time. There is no prospect of peace in Europe. The exchanges show no sign of returning to the normal; and every Dutch, Belgian or German grower can dump his foodstuffs here at what (under the exchange) is a high figure for him; and ruin for you.

The next unpleasant factor is the combination of townworkers and employers, at the expense of the consumer. The example of the railways will be copied as the easiest way out of a difficulty. These two

will combine and the consumer will pay . . . and suffer. Does the farmer suffer from crushing railway rates on everything he buys or sells? Very well . . . let him! Lastly, the organisation of rural labour will be a most disturbing factor. It means that rural wages are going to rise steadily, after a series of disastrous strikes in seed-time and harvest. Equilibrium will be reached of course, as elsewhere; but the scale of pay will be far higher than now, because, when united and fully organised, the landworker has the farmer, at certain periods, at his mercy.

Here then are three points for cogitation. There are others; but these are enough to go on with. They are enough to make anyone pause before investing money in British agriculture.

9.—The Only Hope.

The panaceas that well-meaning folk offer to agriculture are no good. Some of them, put forward by city folk, are subject to the same remarks as applied to the political situation: they cannot be of any value. Others offered by rural dwellers may have some value; but unfortunately they assume a will, in the nation, that is non-existent. They are a waste of good breath.

There is no reason to exaggerate. Things *are* done. Should agriculture suffer for a very long time under too crushing a burden, and should its removal not too seriously affect urban interests; then, presently, something may be done: years too late; by which time the real evil is elsewhere.

But when urban interests are affected

the boot is on the other leg and something happens at once.

Of what use to agriculture are the House of Lords, or the rural Conservative members? None whatever! When it comes to a pinch the rural interests are nowhere.

The Farmers' Union isn't stupid in pronouncing that political power is essential. Where they fail is in having too restricted a vision. There is only one hope. It is for rural England to unite and form Rural Party.

This has been said often before and nothing has been done. But we are in a new century and two things have happened that entirely alter the conditions. These are the organising of our farmers and the unionising of our farm workers.

The latter is the more important. It was desirable that farmers should get together; but until the labourers were united, there was an insuperable obstacle to the forming of a Rural Party. Folks can't

co-operate unless they meet as equals, with equal strength; and to try to secure the help of workers when they were helpless against their employers, was hopeless.

But landworkers are largely organised now and are beginning to hold their own. Of course they can't do much against general bad times any more than farmers can; but still, they are united, and the way is clear for a move forward. There is nothing now to stop the three bodies from coming together and joining on equal terms to fight for their common interests.

They can meet as equals and form a Party that will be superior to existing parties both in its unity, its constitution and its personnel.

10.—The Best Men.

In the cities, democracy is regarded as a failure. After the idealism of the 19th

century a reaction was precipitated by the War, and even Socialists have now no use for the word. They seek a revolution, a bureaucracy and a dictatorship. This is because democracy is a product of communities where everyone knows everyone else and will not bear transplanting to modern cities.

Democracy still works in the country and this explains why, for instance, rural County Councils are composed of excellent men. Politics hardly enter into the elections and the members are chosen on their merits by folk who know all about them. And such bodies when choosing a chairman, untied by politics, and wishing to pick the best man, DO pick extraordinarily good ones. The chairmen of our rural county councils share with our civil judges the distinction of being the two finest types in our nation.

But this is impossible in national politics. It's no use blinking the truth; because

necessity brings forward the tied-delegate or the carpet-bagger or the subsidised lawyer; and democracy goes overboard. Everyone in the country has at some time said to a friend "I wish So-and-So would stand for Parliament. He's a fine man; we all like him and know him and trust him; and if he stood all would vote for him whatever their politics."

But this isn't possible. Everyone votes irresistibly for So-and-So for the Parish or District or County Council; but when it comes to Parliament So-and-So hasn't a chance. If he stood he would have to tie a label to his coat and automatically half his friends would be forced to fight against him. Otherwise he must stand as an Independent and have all the party machines grinding him under together.

Some lawyer or merchant or ambitious townsman or newlyrich landowner, or relation of an old landowner, is jobbed on to the constituency and the rural voter is sent

to the polls to support his old party against the other old party; who have a similar puppet. Never, except by the rarest chance, does the right man even stand. If he should get in he is promptly tied hand and foot by the urban majority of his party.

But a Rural Party would have just these men; the men everyone knows and likes and trusts and wants. And Parliament would be a real Council of the Nation once again. A Rural Party, supported by the complete apprehension and trust of its constituents, would sweep away the present ruck of timeservers, hypocrites, slaves, puppets, and delegates.

11.—How Can It Be Done?

This Rural Party will come into being, not because it is desirable in the national interest (though it IS) but because rural folk must either combine or perish.

This is not a philanthropic ideal set forth because it will be the salvation of England (which it WILL) because idealism in politics is worse than useless. It plays directly into the hands of the scoundrels who rely upon selfinterest, and automatically win. We repeat then that it isn't because it would be an ideal thing, that we believe a Rural Party is about to be born, but simply because it HAS to come about. There is all the difference in the world between these two motives. A movement based upon the first cannot for long be kept afloat; whilst one based on the second—upon reality and necessity—cannot for long be kept back.

Conditions being what they are, a Rural Party can come about in several ways. It can be started by headquarters between the councils of the three bodies concerned; or it may arise in the counties between county boards; or it may come entirely from below. The last is the surest and

probably the only effective way. Delegates are seldom open to new ideas, especially when these cut across existing conditions.

It follows therefore that the best way to help this movement along is to educate the rank and file. And this book is an attempt to do exactly that.

Nothing more is necessary. The thing is as clear as daylight. The way is open. There is an escape from ruin. It only needs pointing out.

12.—It Will Not Be Easy.

The organisation of city-labour has had its effect, and, before our eyes, politics are reshaping. In the immediate future, Conservatives and Liberals are bound to coalesce, on some terms. Probably not until the present[1] leaders, full of old and bitter

memories, have gone. But soon. And the new combinations will expect the rural voter to continue as a sort of poor relation; thankful for any crumbs that fall from the master's table.

But the rise of a Rural Party will upset many calculations and there will be a terrible outcry from all concerned. That cannot be helped. Lessons come home to roost at last, and countryfolk will not for ever be contented with the inferior position, however well-intentioned towards them the city folk may profess to be.

If farm-labourers had been organised just before the War, the Rural Party would have come into being then, when the Conservative Party, thirsting for power, yielded to the pressure of their urban members and adopted Tariff Reform for the townsmen but not for the countrymen. But the labourers were not united. It took a European war to unite them.

IT WILL NOT BE EASY.

The present depression, the repudiation of the policy of the Corn Production Act, and the organisation of the farm-workers, have put the last touches to the situation ; and the Rural Party, being forced to appear, is about to step forward.

The only difficulty in its way is the natural suspicion of Labour. This is so important that a separate section must be given to it.

13.—It Must Come About.

At this point it is necessary to pause and see how far we have got. If we advance the proposition that a Rural Party must in any event come into being, why are we writing this book? And why is it necessary to do anything to push it forward?

Until lately it was impossible to tell where we were going. The war left such

a legacy of confusion, that nobody has known where he stood. We have all been hoping that agriculture would struggle through, and that we should get back somehow to the old times and ways, which—bad as they were—still were endurable. But we see now that this is impossible, and that there is not only no hope for agriculture in city politics, but that things are likely to be very much worse in the immediate future.

This book is written to hasten the birth of the new party. The authors have no axe to grind. They only wish to do their share in saving agriculture from the sort of disaster that befell it in the Eighties and Nineties of the last century.

Truth is irresistible, but only when it gets out of the well; and there are many to keep the lid on it. Until the rural voter hears the truth, he cannot act. Therefore, you who read this—farmer, landowner, or labourer—you must help. The Rural

Party will come into being much more quickly, and get to work sooner and more effectually, if you for your part put your shoulder to the wheel. And you will be saved a vast amount of loss and trouble if you help at once.

We repeat : the Rural Party must come into being by reason of the conditions. But *you* must help. You will be helping yourself.

14.—The Carpet-Bagger.

By whatever method the Rural Party comes into being : whether as the result of enlightened leadership or by pressure of the rank and file, the scene of its activity will certainly be in the counties. The three bodies concerned : landowners, farmers and labourers, will send delegates to the county-town, who will agree on the nomination of

Rural Party candidates, for every rural constituency. Probably they will come to an arrangement by which a suitable worker will take one seat, a good farmer another, a good landlord a third ; and so on. That is all a matter of organisation. The important thing will be that they will satisfy themselves that the men chosen are the men wanted by the constituency, regardless of their old politics or anything else.

When this is effectually done, there is no candidate of the other parties who would get a tithe of the votes cast for the Rural Party. It would win, and hold permanently, every suitable seat.

This is the great difference between fighting for members of a Rural Party, and for Independent, or Farmers' candidates. Those men as a rule fall wretchedly between two, or three, stools. They have all parties, with their machinery and regular supporters, against them ; and no one to back them permanently. To succeed in

this venture, you must have unity and a party organisation behind you.

When once this is done, the rural voters will wonder, with great amazement, how it was that they went on for so long in the old stupid way; allowing themselves to be used as puppets by city organisers. One has only to reflect for a moment to see how ridiculous it was. With rural voters fighting against each other tooth and nail, they were all at the mercy of the city politician. Whoever carried the rural seat, it didn't matter. The city won, just the same. But until now, there has been no practicable alternative.

We believe in democracy and in parliamentary rule. In the city, faith in our ancient system has largely waned. Labour, impatient at its incapacity to remove the evils that industrial-capitalism has laid upon its shoulders, leans more and more toward force and violence; impelled thereto by Socialism which has no use for

democracy. And apart from Labour, the last generation has seen a sad weakening in the authority of our national Council.

This arises from the process that we describe, whereby Members are not the natural nor desired representatives of their constituents. It can only be cured in the manner that we suggest, whereby the carpet-bagger will be abolished.

The only alternative to traditional parliamentary rule is revolution and dictatorship.

15.—Some Results.

We do not wish, here, to outline the actions of a Rural Party; even if that were possible. It is easy, however, to foresee that such a party, strong, united, with some support in the Upper House, and, at times, holding the balance between the other

parties, would be in a position to deal adequately with matters as and when they arose.

No longer would it cost more to send a barrel of apples from York to London than from British Columbia. Our railways would suddenly cease to protect the foreigner against the British grower; as they often do now. Dutch or German potatoes would no longer be dumped in our eastern ports, at a few shillings a ton. In short: the whole load of oppression and unfair treatment and discrimination that a century of industrial capitalism has placed on our shoulder, will be thrown off. Rates, Taxes, Roads, Education, Transport, and the rest, will assume a different hue. Confidence in British agriculture will be restored; capital will flow to it again; and the result will be prosperity.

There will be an end to 'Summertime.' This monstrosity is bred of the unnatural manner of living that has arisen in the city. Being unable to amend its

ways, it has tampered with the clock in order to deceive itself to its own benefit; a typical instance of the departure from natural conditions, carried out at the expense of the rural worker and the farmer.

As soon as confidence is restored in agriculture, capital will automatically flow into the countryside and all the things that are necessary will come about in the usual manner. Sugarbeet factories and Starch factories (from surplus potatoes) will follow on fiscal rearrangements; Bacon factories, Creameries, Co-operative Societies of all kinds, Landbanks, Light Railways, Cottage Building and many other desiderate things will come to pass in the normal manner when confidence is restored. Until then they are mainly idle dreams. If started artificially, they have no base in reality and soon founder.

The great battle will be over Free Trade. This is not the place to argue that question. There is plenty to be said; but in the realm

of politics reason has no sway. Only force counts. Remember that. It is everlastingly true. ONLY FORCE COUNTS. Free Trade has sheltered and fostered the foreign trade of our cities at our expense. It is going to be our turn now.

It is easy to show that, under a reasonable plan, foodstuffs would cost the townman no more than at present, and that it is more economic and in the national interest for a fair level of prices to be maintained, rather than to suffer under violent fluctuations ; but this has been said too often to deaf ears. The time has come to act. The reign of cheap food for keeping down wages and keeping up export trade regardless of the ruin of farmers, sweating of labourers, jettison of landowners, depopulation of the countryside and the risk of famine in war, have counted as nothing to the city manufacturer.

He only respects force. Very well!

We will use force. The cap-in-hand attitude that we have had to adopt for several generations, when we wanted the barest justice, is as degrading as it is useless.

Only force counts.

16.—Free Trade.

Although this is not the place for dealing with the great topic of Free Trade, there is a fear that the Rural Party might be confused with those Tariff Reformers, who under Joseph Chamberlain and Bonar Law gained control of the Conservative Party before the war. They promised everything to everyone, as recklessly as any Communist, and had no hesitation in sacrificing agriculture in their thirst for power. Finding that their Policy would not go down with urban voters because of the cry of

'dear food' raised by the Liberals, Mr. Bonar Law announced a startling change in policy whereby there was to be a tariff for the city manufacturer, but none for the farmer. Such a storm however was raised in the countryside that only the war saved the Conservative party from the result of this step. We quote the incident because it illustrates our contention that we have nothing to hope for from the Conservatives. They are now preponderantly urban.

The Liberals have always been Free Traders. They made almost a religion of it; but no one dreamed that the Conservatives would seek to improve upon them and betray agriculture in that manner.

It is of interest to learn from our enemies. Just before the war, Germany was considering her fiscal policy and Prince Von Bulow dismissed the notion of Free Trade as "wholly unsuitable, because agriculture would become more and more unprofitable,

and would have to be given up to a great extent . . . and we should go the way England has gone."

At that time not only were Germany's trade and commerce advancing faster than ours but they had many more people on the land than we, and raised more food from each acre.

We don't wish to revive stale controversies about whether Protection spells black bread and horseflesh. Whilst the townsmen have power they will follow what they think is their own interest, however much that may be against the national interest. But we do not wish to be confused with those Tariff Reformers who sought to betray us and were completely out-argued and outmanœuvred by the Free Traders.

Under a sane system—whether it be a Sliding-tariff, a Guarantee of prices, a Stabilization of prices, Food-Control or whatnot — the prosperity of agriculture would be assured ; capital would flow where con-

fidence was restored, light railways and cottages would be built, credit would be extended to land-owners and farmers just as easily as it is to city merchants or foreign concessionnaires; the utmost crops would be raised continuously; and the urban consumer would get his food at a more level price. It is in time of scarcity that the middlemen seizes his opportunity like a shark.

We stand for some policy of protection that will restore the balance between urban and rural economy, that will ensure farmers a living return for their industry, and that will put an end to the monstrous fact that the larger the crop the smaller the price.

National welfare demands that our land shall be as productive as possible; shall employ as many hands and raise the largest crops that can be obtained. But our economic system impels that the exact opposite shall often be the case. Great crops of perishable foodstuffs often mean

ruinous prices. The bounty of nature and the initiative of the cultivator too often spell bankruptcy. The tales of fruit rotting on the trees and potatoes in the fields appear as lunatic inventions when we think of the late war, but they persist. At the moment of writing this book thousands of tons of potatoes in Lincolnshire will lie and rot. And at this moment the Government refuses the suggestion of a Commission to put up a barrier against foreign potato-dumping *whilst keeping up one against motor-cars !*

Please bear this incident in mind. The next time some carpetbagging lawyer from a city or some paid organiser comes round and says that the Conservative Party is the real friend of the agriculturist, just remind him of this point. Don't forget it !

17.—A Word to the Owner.

You are probably a Conservative, or a Whig, and you are naturally depressed about the state of affairs. It's quite clear that your class is being squeezed out of existence. Are you content to be squeezed out of existence?

What have you to say about a Rural Party?

Just think how much you have contributed to the Conservative funds. Haven't you often been angry? Haven't you often been in despair? Yet you have gone on giving money and time to that party simply because there was nothing else to be done. You couldn't support Liberalism or Labour. That would be too stupid. If you have to sink, you would rather it be in the company of your friends; or at least in the party which once stood for agriculture, and still

contains most of your class. There was no alternative and no hope.

Of course you won't take readily to the notion of leaving that party, even if it has long since abandoned you. You have looked, naturally, with suspicion upon attempts to seduce you into other camps. And quite rightly. But this is a Land Party. It is a party that will gather together all who live on or by the land, and who believe in rural England. There will be nothing in its creed repugnant to you. And you must help to bring it about as soon as possible.

Probably you agree with every word written here and have been saying the same thing over and over again. Well . . . now is your chance to turn your words into action. You can spread this idea amongst your neighbours. Get them to buy this book. Discuss it. Give a copy to your tenant farmers. Talk to them about it. Help.

In all probability this is your last chance!

18.—One for the Farmer.

It isn't necessary to tell YOU that something drastic has to be done, because you know that only too well. You have bad times to fear with everything going against you ; with prices of what you must buy up in the sky and prices for what you sell low down and falling but never rising. And organised Labour will be pressing you over the edge of the plank all the time.

Unless you do something !

You have seen this for some time. Even before the war you began to organise, and you have done that pretty thoroughly. But that isn't enough. You have to go further.

There have been attempts to wheedle you into various political camps but you have found one to be as bad as another. They are all city-parties, and naturally

stick up for themselves. They are not to blame for that. But you, too, must do the same.

You have been ready for some time to stick up for yourself, and have even begun to put up your own candidates for Parliament; but that hasn't been very successful. Indeed it never could be successful for there are not enough of you to hope to get any sizeable party. Yet you saw nothing else to be done.

And all the time things have gone on getting worse.

This Rural Party will unite your labourers and your landlord as well as the village shopkeeper, the merchant and everyone who is dependent upon agriculture. That is to say, ninety-five out of every hundred voters in your constituency. The folks in the market town are just as dependent upon agriculture as you are. Remember that. They are realising it, too. They are suffering. The doctors, lawyers,

auctioneers, clergy, dentists, are feeling the depression. And the new Rural Party will take them all in.

When the Rural Party begins work you will have the right man in your neighbourhood to vote for. It may be yourself; it may be some neighbour; at any rate it will be someone that you have always known and trusted as a good sound man. He will be the very best man in the district.

You will see what this means if you think it over. Probably you can put your finger on the man right away. Everyone will want to work for him and vote for him and it won't be any use anyone else standing against him. They won't do it twice, either. The city profiteer or the lawyer will go back to London and say: "You can cross that constituency off your map. They've booked if for themselves."

The only thing needful is for you to help to spread this idea. Talk to your neighbours about it. Lend this book

to them. Get them to buy it for themselves and pass it on. And, most important of all, talk it over with your labourers.

The Rural Party can start right away if you do your share. Why not work for yourself?

19.—Also the Labourer.

Times are bad! It's true that you are organised, but, as you've found lately, the strongest Union in the world can't force money out of farmers when they haven't got it. Neither can the landlord help. He's just as badly off as the farmer. If he sold out his land and took his money to the city, he would be far better off than he is now.

Not only are things bad, but they look like being a lot worse for a long time to come; and it almost seems as if you might

be starved out of your job altogether. You will have to go into the town then, and get a job in some factory or foundry—if you can find one—and if the city Trades-Unions will let you have it.

Not a very bright look-out is it?

This sounds like another of the old dodges to get your vote for an employer. You've been had that way so often that you've made your mind up never again to vote for any but a proper Labour candidate. No one can blame you for that. Your brother-workers in the city have set you an example, and you mean to follow it.

Now this is not an attempt to get you to leave your Union. On the opposite, we want you to stop in it and make it as strong as possible. This scheme of a Rural Party can't be carried out unless you are strong and united. Otherwise, you can't ever bargain. But if you keep together, you will have a full share of the new party, and a full voice in picking the

candidate and framing the policy that the party is to follow. You will meet the delegates of the landlord and the farmer and agree amongst yourselves as to the best man for your constituency. This may be one of yourselves. At any rate he will be a man that you have trust in. And as you have more votes than the farmer and landlord put together, you haven't anything to fear. You won't be done out of anything.

Of course you won't like the idea of working, now, for anybody but a Labour candidate. But neither will the farmers and landlords like the idea of leaving their old parties. After you've tried it however, you won't want to do anything else.

You have to find out what the farmers and landlords have found out: that the towns are the real enemy. It's all right for the railway labourer; he can strike and squeeze up wages and the company simply puts that on to the carriage, which you in the country have to pay. It comes off

the farmers' profit and off your wages!

But the farmer can't squeeze his prices up. The folks in the towns keep him down, all the time.

So there you are! The farmer and the landlord and the village shopkeeper have got to give up the Liberal and Conservative parties, simply because they *are* town parties, and always leave agriculture in the lurch. And you have got to do the same. You have to have your OWN party. And then—when things are better—you will see that you get your share.

Of course you can stick to the other way and refuse to come into this Rural Party. It won't amount to anything then. You can strike in seed-time, hay-time, harvest, and so on; and the result will be that farmers will be forced to let their land go down to grass; and you will be forced into the nearest city. Your leaders will tell you that if an industry can't pay a living wage, it is better dead; and there's

something in that! Neither farming nor manufacture nor anything else has a right to succeed by starving its workers. But that doesn't help you, when it's said. You would have to emigrate.

Let us be quite clear about one point. We don't say that if farming is better again, you are bound to get your share. You remember—or your fathers do—when the opposite was the case. Human nature doesn't change. But the great difference is that you have at last got together into Unions and you will be able to secure your share of better times when they come, just as your brothers in the town do. That's the difference. It's very important.

Turn this over in your mind. Talk it over with your wife, and your neighbours. There's something in it. And it depends, chiefly, on YOU.

20.—The National View.

Town-dwellers, merchants, manufacturers, exporters, and all those whose eyes are fixed on foreign trade instead of the possible expansion of the home market, do not enter into our plans for a Rural Party. They look after themselves with the three Urban parties. They have been doing it for about a hundred years with the greatest success. And the ultimate interests of the country have suffered thereby.

We don't ask them for their help because their price is too high. It ruins us. But all the same a political party must have a national policy, if it intends to be a national party.

We believe that the revival of agriculture will not only be of enormous benefit to England, but that it is absolutely necessary for our national welfare that a saner

balance be restored between town and country. We believe that the restoration of confidence in agriculture will spell prosperity for the townsman. We believe that a Rural Party will, by reason of its constitution and methods, have better representatives than the old parties, and will restore to Parliament the confidence of the people, which it has largely lost. We believe that the birth of a Rural Party is the best thing that can happen to England.

For a century the urban interests with their eyes on foreign trade have neglected the development and expansion of the home market; but the war has left them in a different position. It is possible that they may now begin to turn their eyes to the market at their own door instead of looking thousands of miles from home.

Let us examine the national position.

The swollen England of the nineteenth century, which, at the finish, outrivalled Imperial Rome, has gone for ever. Incon-

ceivably wealthy on her world-tribute, she was already doomed when the twentieth century began, by the rise of trading rivals, who were no longer content to allow her to be the sole exploiter of three-quarters of the planet. The War simply hastened this process and we are now left with the problem of maintaining some forty million Britons, the basis of whose subsistence has crumbled.

Never again can we hope to hold the favoured position that we enjoyed at the end of the last century.

21.—England's Future.

In the year 1801 the population of England and Wales was eight and three-quarter millions, who were fed and maintained at home. There was foreign trade for luxuries; but these were not essential to our existence. The England of 1801

was much the same as it had been for a very long time. The cities, manufactures, mining and trading, were no more than was compatible with the size of our rural population ; and the ancient feudal system, modified to meet changing conditions, reigned supreme.

At the outbreak of the War, 79.3 per cent. of the people of England and Wales were in urban districts, and only 20.7 per cent. in rural districts, and we imported practically the whole of the wheat and flour required for this swollen urban population.

The stablest nations are those which maintain a sane balance between rural and urban interests. It is clear that we are in the position of a pyramid balanced upon its apex.

The cityfolk begin to see this ; the manufacturers begin to guess at it, and everywhere we hear prophecies of the coming downfall of industrial capitalism. But no one prophesies what is going to come about.

We shall probably have a period of desperate remedies; of experiments with things like Urban Tariffs, and other nostrums, whilst all the time the burden of taxation will continue to crush us into the soil. But the rise of a Rural Party, envisaging a return toward the conditions of the beginning of the last century, will be a sign of hope, because that party will have the logic of events on its side. Time is with us. The current has changed, and we shall win.

The struggle between the town and the country culminated around the Seventies and Eighties of the last century, when a series of bad harvests, combined with the unrestricted import of cheap food, ruined great numbers of our farmers and impoverished all our landowners. The traders cared nothing for rural welfare. Cheap food to keep wages down and a vast world-export were all-important, whilst the welfare of those on the land and the self-

sufficiency of the nation were of no importance whatever.

But the supremacy of the export trader is over. The vast edifice which he reared after Waterloo filled the sky, but the foundations were rotten, and the shock of war revealed its decay. Our trading caste has failed, because industrial capitalism is self-destroying. The needful balance between town and country was lost.

22.—In the Dark.

The balance was lost, not only in economics and politics but in every other way. In the England of 1801 everyone knew exactly where he was, and the Government acted in a continuously coherent manner, as was easy under the circumstances. Under one law, one system of thought and one religion, the nation was a unit. The rise

of industrialism and its swollen cities destroyed that unity, and the war revealed that we were no longer One.

The period since the War has been, for thinking Englishmen, the most wretched of their lives; not so much by reason of material want, but because it has become evident that all are ignorant where they are drifting. There is no light, no shepherd, and the younger generation is growing up into an inchoate confusion like that of the Roman Empire just before its dissolution. This confusion extends to religion, politics, patriotism, manners, sex, and has attacked the deeper roots of conduct hitherto unquestioned. The war helped; bearing, as it did, problems from the outer world; but it only acted as a shock to bring the growing changes to a head.

Our newspapers show signs of this mental morass. No one knows what to say, do, or think. We are in the dark.

The difficulty is the break in tradition.

The Industrial nineteenth century cut loose from the rules, laws, morals, and customs that *were* England, and the new generation sees what a mess they made of their century.

It is beginning to dawn on them that perhaps after all the eighteenth century was on the right lines: that you cannot allow unlimited individual freedom; that some must suffer for the good of others; that hard cases must be; and that without discipline, law, rule and punishment, there is no safety.

When the Socialists tell us, in hair-raising tones, that we are in a mess, and must abolish property and employers and capital, they may convince the unthinking, simply because they are saying SOMETHING. Yet the answer is simple enough We agree that things can't go along on the present lines.

They are not going on. They are going back!

23.—Political Idealism.

If industrial capitalism was the evil root of the last century, then political idealism was the great malady. Our idealists: our international Socialists, Anarchists and Communists—think that if a system has abuses, it must be uprooted, because those abuses are so interwoven with the whole that they cannot see how they may be separated. They feel that anything is better than the old way, and as they have discovered the inadequacy of their earlier attempts at reform, they preach a violent break: a revolution: a day of rectification; an entire cleaning of the slate.

Just as the real bulwark against Bolshevism was provided by the Russian peasant, so the real defence against the disruptive attacks upon Old England are its rural dwellers. They still maintain the old ideas.

They still think that a system which has existed for so long is probably the best. They believe that humanity is and always will be divided into the small number who dare take risks and lead the way and the great herd who daren't risk anything and want to be guided. To quote the words of an old Conservative: "The very fact that any doctrine has been believed by thoughtful men and received by whole generations and nations, is an important factor . . . The long duration of a belief is at least proof of an adaptation in it to some portion of the human mind, and if on digging down, we do not find (as is generally the case) some truth we shall find some natural want or requirement of human nature, which the doctrine in question is fitted to satisfy."

This is true conservatism. The Conservative town-party, lusting after strange gods, has completely lost its foothold, and it is the new Rural Party which will have again to raise the banner of Old England.

24.—Back to the Land.

If our great-grandfathers could see the mess that we have made, they would return to their graves with a sigh. They believed in something real; and that is essential; for unless a people have faith they must surely perish.

There is no faith at present; for the cities have the power, and rural England is almost entirely without a voice. It still believes and carries on, as far as it is able, in the good old way; but a hundred years battering has told its tale, and it has almost perished. Nearly all our people are herded and crammed into the foul cities, and we are not yet nearly ready to leave the long cradle of our youth.

What's wrong with the city is that it IS a city: an unnatural manner of life. And being unnatural, in the strongest sense of

the word, it has rotted and become cancerous; with insoluble problems.

The Land has its problems, but they are simple ones and have always been settled pretty satisfactorily. We cannot go back to Queen Elizabeth or the Golden Age or Merrie England any more than we can return to the Incas, because our world has extended its boundaries; but there are records and milestones showing us how to live under natural conditions. And in the more remote parts of our country, the old way of life can still be seen.

Man learnt the art of living in small communities several thousand years ago, and has not yet advanced beyond Athens. A people must have one King, one Church and one Law before they can live together as a community with comfort or happiness or safety. To believe anything else is to suffer from the illusion of progress that has poisoned our idealists for so long a time.

If we have faith in the outcome, it is

because of our confidence in the qualities that have made England great through the ages ; qualities now hidden by the cities' smoke. But they still remain, and will assert themselves when the cities and their smoke have cleared away.

25.—Conclusion.

As we have advanced, it is clear that the owners of land are the real opponents of the Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, and other revolutionaries and disruptive folk ; and for this reason all who stand for private property, and a civilisation founded thereon, will tend to fall into the ranks of a Rural Party, which will have no tampering with its principles in order to gain urban votes.

There will be presently only two parties in England : those who believe that " pro-

perty is theft" (to quote their apostle) and those who stand for property and individualism and religion and the home and family and tradition and the old ways . . . and Old England. The Conservative Party at one time represented these people but it has abandoned them. It has yielded its standground of principle and trimmed its sails to the wind to purchase power. Its present temptation is to serve as a passive rallying ground for all those who hate or fear working-men; and it seems likely that there will soon be a fusing of the remnant of the Liberal Party with the Conservatives on such a ground.

But this bogey-cry, to herd sheep between high walls, smacks too much of Ethelred the Unready and Danegelt. It is a policy that has never succeeded, and never will. A horde of wealthy men huddling into a pen and throwing their possessions one by one to the wolves, first surrendering this and then that, and stick-

ing to what they have as long as possible, with no thought of the obligations of property or of the country or anyone but themselves, *invites and deserves destruction.*

Labour, headed by Socialism, does say something definite. It has a definite policy and for that reason many of the young enthusiasts of the Liberal Party have flocked to its banner. Had the Conservative Party stuck to its principles it would not have lost so much ground ; nor would it have been in power upon a minority vote.

The loss of national beliefs that alone hold a race together leads directly to revolution and then to dictatorship. The genius of the English race is for compromise, for persistence, for tradition and for democracy. Our people want neither Socialism, Anarchism, Communism nor Bolshevism any more than they want a Mussolini or Lenin or Lloyd George dictatorship. The last general election showed this. Mr.

Bonar Law went to the polls *without any programme at all;* and this novelty startled a world of professional politicians almost out of their senses.

The Conservatives never expected their success. Indeed a strong body of them announced that they were certain to lose the election if they allowed Mr. Lloyd George to go!

Unfortunately the party is incapable of drawing the obvious lesson, which stands out as clearly as the sun at noonday, that if the party returned to its old ways and stood for Principle alone, it would rule, in due turn, more often and more surely, and far more satisfactorily, than it has done for the last three-quarters of a century.

No one is perfect; neither men, villages, cities, nor nations. We do not advance that rural England has no wrongs or abuses or imperfections. A community is never on so high a plane as its most enlightened members, and if we study

crowd-psychology and democratic government, we find that a community is lower than the common denominator of its units.

Nor do we say that city-dwellers are bad people. But we do say that conditions of life being better in the country, that rural folk lead a more natural existence, and that their communal life is in advance of that of the city. And if we refer to the city-dweller as an 'enemy,' this is not that he acts improperly in his own interest, or in any other manner than a rural dweller would act if so transferred. But facts must be faced, and if the interests of the city have for some generations conflicted sharply and dangerously with the interests of agriculture, we feel that this should be recognised by all parties.

Understanding of a case is the first step to a compromise that is the best remedy.

The Rural Party will take its place with a clear policy, and with definite

principles. It will stand for something concrete. And by these it will prevail.

We live in dark times and no one knows the outcome. But one thing is certain. Principle must prevail. The sigh of relief over the downfall of the late Coalition and its leader was heartfelt and nation-wide. The English people want and demand sincerity. They want to know exactly where they stand and where they are being led. They may be deceived for a time by clever adroitness or cunning agility, but ultimately they repudiate these and demand leaders of ascertainable principle.

Here then is our suggestion for the consideration of all who live on or by the land. It is not a cut-and-dried plan that we put forth. We only wish to unfurl a banner.

The Rural Party will shape its own destiny.

STOKE ROCHFORD,
1923.

BOOKS WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER TURNOR

1. LAND PROBLEMS AND NATIONAL WELFARE.

2. OUR FOOD SUPPLY.

3. THE LAND AND THE EMPIRE.

4. LAND AND ITS PROBLEMS.

The "Old England" Series

By BERNARD GILBERT

THIS enterprise is something entirely novel in the history of literature. Mr. Gilbert is writing a series of books about a rural district in which, by various methods, he hopes to present the whole of a typical community in a manner never before attempted.

The English market-town with its area of parishes is a self-contained unit. For thirty years the author lived in such a district, taking a full share in its various activities, and it is this which enables him to offer something new. Never before, perhaps, has a writer enjoyed such an intensive experience.

A countryman knows every one in his own village, a great many in the adjacent villages, and a certain number in all the local parishes and his market-town. Hence a villager conversing with a friend takes for granted an intimate knowledge of the locality, and every thought, speech, and action, is conditioned by this factor. It is this local apprehension that the ordinary novel cannot hope to present.

In the Old England Series, Mr. Gilbert is using various methods of literary presentment in succession, and though each of the books must stand on its own feet, they should be read in turn to obtain the desired effect, and none of them can be completely comprehended until the last volume has appeared. Instead of being mere sequels in time, they form extensions in space, with successive thickenings of texture and a working in three planes; so that the result shall be a solid rather than a flat presentation. The author's avowed

object is to place his reader in the position of an inhabitant of his District, and although the reader's cognition must be extended to embrace the several thousand characters and the hundred and fifty square miles of wold, heath, fen, and marsh, roads, fields, rivers, and woods, churches, chapels, inns, and dwellings, he will have been provided with the material for such an extension.

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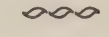

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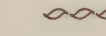

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